

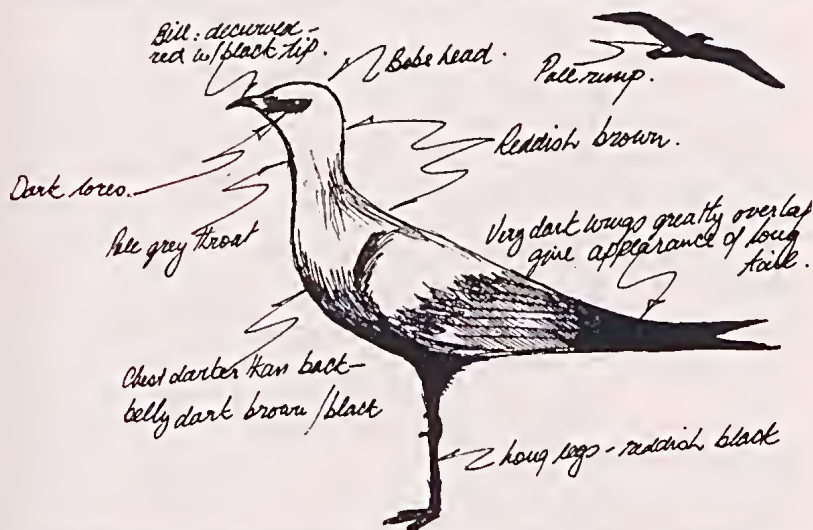
bill than the nominate race. Wing length given by Witherby *et al.* for nominate *nilotica* (300-337 mm) is considerably greater than in the Lawley River specimen.

It is possible that Asian Gull-billed Terns frequently visit the sheltered tidal waters of Kimberley and Northern Territory during the southern summer. Eastern Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo longipennis*) and White-winged Black Terns (*Sterna leucoptera*), both summer migrants from the Northern Hemisphere, were collected during the same biological survey of Admiralty Gulf and its hinterland in October 1976.

—R. E. JOHNSTONE, Western Australian Museum.

Australian Pratincole at Lake Mason.—On November 12, 1975, about 1620 hours, I saw two Australian Pratincoles (*Stiltia isabellae*) on a bare stony wash at the eastern end of the air-strip at Lake Mason, approximately 55 km north of Sandstone. One of the birds ran for a distance of about 20 m with its head turned at an angle of 90° to its body, then braked sharply with the aid of its wings to capture a large grasshopper. The grasshopper was struck on the ground 10-12 times before being swallowed.

The birds showed no alarm but stood quietly, occasionally bobbing their heads. They took flight when an approach was made at 20 m or so.



The accompanying annotated sketch was made from my field notes.

—C. P. S. de REBEIRA, Balceatta.

A Survey of Breeding Seabirds on Mistaken Island, Western Australia. On September 23, 1976 a survey of breeding seabirds was carried out on Mistaken (or Rabbit) Island, King George Sound, W.A. The survey occurred during a visit from 1330 to 1630 hours by Dr I. Abbott, my wife and myself and Mr. Cliff Meredith who kindly provided the dinghy and rowed the party the short distance involved.

The island is about 10 ha of which about 10 per cent is exposed rock or rock with very shallow soil covering. The remaining area has good soil depth for burrowing seabirds and is well vegetated with bushes up to some four metres. The presence of many rabbits was apparent from the scratchings, droppings and warrens; one was sighted.

Ninety-four burrows were searched. Little Penguins, *Endeavour minor*, at various stages of breeding or preparation were found in 34 and one

nestling was very close to feather development. The remaining 60 burrows were empty; about ten were smaller at the entrance and with a narrower tunnel than the usual penguin burrow. These burrows showed no sign of recent occupation or use. They were located on the south-east side and may have been burrows used previously by the Great-winged Petrel, *Pterodroma macroptera*, which has been recorded breeding on the island (Serventy, Serventy and Warham, *The Handbook of Australian Sea-Birds*, 1971); the dried remains of one of these birds was found during the visit.

The penguin burrows were spread sparsely over the whole island except in the areas of bare rock or shallow soil. They bred in cavities among the rocks around the shoreline and one bird was brooding nestlings in a thick patch of grass. No evidence was found of White-faced Storm-Petrels, *Pelagodroma marina*; Basset Hull (*Emu*, 21, 1922: 27) had considered uninhabited burrows belonged to this species. One Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus* was present but gave no indication of nesting.

Some black and white feathers were found, apparently from the work of an avian predator. Dr Abbott forwarded them to Dr G. M. Storr (Western Australian Museum) and they were identified as those of the Cape Petrel *Daption capense*.

—S. G. LANE, 65 Wood Street, Lane Cove, N.S.W.

An extension of the range of the Western Bristlebird, *Dasyornis longirostris*.—At the time of settlement the Western Bristlebird was known to have been in coastal areas from Perth to Albany. Following the destruction of the population at Wilson's Inlet (Denmark) by fire in 1914, there were no more reports of the bird until it was rediscovered at Two Peoples Bay in 1945 (Serventy and Whittell, *Birds of Western Australia*, 1967). It was subsequently found at the Waychinicup River in 1960 (Ford, *Emu*, 63, 1963: 437).

While travelling through the Fitzgerald River National Park along the old telegraph line on 26 June 1976, a Western Bristlebird was heard singing. Subsequently five pairs were heard to sing in the area (about 1 km²) which was 62 km west of East Mt. Barron and north of Woolbennup Hill.

The area was a wide expanse of undulating open heath, 50 to 100 cm high with elongated patches of various eucalypts including *Eucalyptus tetragona* and *E. decipiens*, two to four metres tall and some 50 to 500 m² in area along the drainage lines. These eucalypts have a dense understorey of closed heath, 1 to 1.5 metres tall. The most common species in both the open and closed heaths were *Melaleuca stricta*, *Adenanthos cuneata*, *Daviesia reversifolia*, *Casuarina humilis*, *Leptospermum* sp., *Anarthria prolifera* and *A. gracilis*.

The exact location of two of the five pairs was obtained; in both cases they were in the eucalypt clumps. One pair that was followed for an hour moved between three clumps over an area of 150 m². It appears that here as well as at the Waychinicup River and Two Peoples Bay the Western Bristlebird prefers areas of closed heath while the Field-wren (*Calamanthus fuliginosus*) occupies the open heath.

Plumage details were only obtained from one pair. In general the plumage appeared washed out compared with the other populations. The head was grey, the upper parts were grey-brown, the belly and flanks were grey-brown and the primaries were a very pale chestnut.

The songs heard were within the range of variation of those from Two Peoples Bay and Waychinicup River.

There are extensive areas of suitable habitat in the Park and the total population may well exceed that of Two Peoples Bay which is about 80 pairs (Smith, *Emu*, 77, 1977: in press). If this is so then the long term survival of the Western Bristlebird appears relatively secure, given adequate management of its habitat.

—G. T. SMITH and L. A. MOORE